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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

March 15, 2019

The Journey is Our Home

Grace and peace! How is your journey through Lent? We often use the image of journey during Lent: journey through the wilderness, journey to Jerusalem, etc. But there is also another image – “the journey is our home.” This is a wonderful image of the reality that life is constantly changing around us and we are changing. Therefore, as Biblical people we keep our faith in God’s presence central on our journey through the unknown. This allows us to live more fully in the present.



There are times we long for clarity and stability as something which ought to be, something that would be our anchor. Sometimes we remember the past in this way. However, we probably only remember certain aspects of the past and it is the familiarity that actually provides the comfort. Sometimes we create an image of what should be and make that a goal as if we will reach the end of our quest as we imagine it. As humans, we do this in our personal lives and our lives as congregations.

Yet it is in the journey itself: the unknown, the twists and turns that deepen our groundedness in our faith. It is this groundedness that allows us to make “the journey our home.”

In recent conversations, someone expressed being tired of transitions in the Southeast Conference. It is a reality that there has been much transition, particularly in the past 6 years: the 17-year Conference leadership of Rev. Tim Downs was followed by 6 years of three “temporary”

Conference Ministers; at the same time the Board of Directors moved from 30 to 14 people; the Association Commissions on Ministry with some different processes were combined into one Conference-wide Commission; some churches left the covenant of the Conference while others joined the Conference bringing new perspectives; and the Conference moved from having a physical office to a virtual office. There has been a lot of transition - which can be tiring. We often long for stability.

Yet, transition also presents us with possibilities. It takes courage to be open to these possibilities: courage to ask questions and courage to ponder and imagine in different ways. This does not mean that we do not seek clarity and some stability. It just means that when we open ourselves to God's leading, we will always be on a journey which will mean transition.

May your journey through Lent, individually and as congregations, be filled with the sense of pondering and wonderment, knowing that the journey is where you belong: the journey is your home.

Blessings, Char

News from the Conference Office



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2019. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of March 18

- First Congregational UCC; Atlanta, Georgia
- Common Global Ministries and all mission personnel
- Thomas Baird
- Robert Foreman
- Cheryl Slusser

Week of March 25

- New Hope Congregational Christian; Clio, Alabama
- Southeast Conference Staff
- Cindy L Bovee-Kemper
- Aubra Love
- Tom Mozley
- Alan Ballentine

In Our Prayers

- We hold in prayer the family of **Rev. Dr. David Brown**, former pastor of **Pilgrim Congregational Church** in Chattanooga. Dave passed away on Monday, March 11, 2019 in Clearwater, Florida. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 23 in Dunedin, Florida.
- **Rev. Paul Hackett**, pastor of **Church of the Savior** (our former UCC congregation in Alpharetta, GA) was recently admitted to hospice care. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.
- We rejoice with **Peace Church, Clemson** as they have called **Rev. Michael Cleland** as their new pastor. His first Sunday is March 17.

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; United Church of Huntsville, Huntsville AL; First Congregational, Birmingham AL; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational Christian, Montgomery AL; First Congregational, Savannah GA

From the Generosity Coordinator

God calls us to the work of strengthening the interconnected threads. "Whatever affects one of us directly affects all of us indirectly." (MLK) We are all in this, together.

It is TOGETHER that we learn, we grow and we love. We learn to rely on

GOD with a spirit of mutuality as we strive to build faithful leaders and vital communities in all of our churches, all proclaiming a radical welcome that embraces ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN!!! Our focus is on leadership and development and congregational vitality, yet the scope of our ministries and our visions are much wider.

Your OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission) dollars make all these initiatives possible. We remain grateful for all the ways you continue to support the Southeast Conference United Church of Church.

Come, let us reason...TOGETHER. Please continue to invite me to your church, so that we may discuss ways that we can make this conference stronger. We are BETTER TOGETHER.

Blessings as we journey, TOGETHER,
Min. Carrole Moss



Mandatory Annual Authorized Minister Review

As a reminder, it's time once again for the **Yearly Information Review for All Authorized Ministers** in the Southeast Conference. You can either [fill out the form online here](#) or you can [download and print the form here](#) and mail it to the Southeast Conference, PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031.

2019 Annual Meeting



That We May All Be One

Southeast Conference Annual Meeting

Thursday, May 30 to Sunday, June 2

Pleasant Hill Community Church, Tennessee

More details coming very soon!

Registration Now Open for Annual Meeting 53!

We are excited for this year's Annual Meeting and **welcoming our General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer.**

Our Theme for this year is: *"That We May All Be One"* – Notice the unique wording that we have chosen for this year's theme? It is based on the motto of the UCC, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). The SEC Annual Meeting 2019 will be one you recognize, but is packed with new, informative, and exciting opportunities. Please [see the website](#) for more information about the Annual Meeting and to Register!

REGISTER TODAY

Expo at Annual Meeting

Calling all people, businesses, or UCC affiliated entities that would like to have a table at the Expo at the Southeast Conference's Annual Meeting May 30th- June 1st. This year we are opening up our Expo to crafters and non-profits as well as UCC affiliated entities.

- Have you written a book?
- Does your church sell Fair Trade items?
- Do you make stoles?
- Design websites for churches and non-profits?
- Offer educational opportunities for clergy or lay leadership?

A table at the Expo might be for you! If you are interested in reserving a table, please contact email Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org.

Announcements in Annual Meeting Program

We will again have the opportunity for churches and UCC affiliated

ministries to have announcements or ads in the Annual Meeting booklet for Annual Meeting 2019. Is there an event coming up your church would like to invite the conference to? A special celebration to lift up? Announcements cost \$25 for a quarter page, \$50 for a half page, and \$100 for a half page. Discounts available based on church size. Please email Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org for more details. The deadline for submitting an advertisement is April 30, 2019.

News from the Wider Church

Southern/Southeast ONA Retreat is March 28-30

Join ONA Coalition Executive Director Andy Lang and the Rev. Julie Peeples for a special ONA retreat in the North Carolina mountains. We'll learn how "Open and Affirming" churches can revive their mission and face new challenges with confidence. The retreat includes Andy's "ONA 201" workshop and a presentation by Rev. Peeples on "Family Separation, Sanctuary and Immigration." The event is at the Johns River Valley Camp. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Sign up for Monthly Environmental Justice Webinars

In the 1980s, the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis and the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice played a leading role in the launch of the environmental justice movement through a six-week civil disobedience campaign and the publishing of a landmark study called, "Toxic Wastes and Race In The United States" It was Chavis that coined the phrase "environmental racism." Faith communities were at the heart of the environmental justice movement in its origin. This is the mantle that we have been given, and it is our honor to carry it.

In continuing the legacy of Chavis and the Commission for Racial Justice, the United Church of Christ's Environmental Justice Ministry, Interfaith Power and Light, and The People's Justice Council conduct monthly



webinars with environmental experts, faith leaders, and movement builders. The Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt and the Rev Michael Malcom, MDiv, MBA ,co-host this webinar and look at today's climate justice issues from a perspective of faith. Please sign up today to be on the monthly webinars! http://www.ucc.org/creation_justice_webinar_series

Update on Clergy Housing Allowance Lawsuit

You may been aware that a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the clergy housing allowance was on appeal in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals after a federal court in Wisconsin held that the allowance was unconstitutional as a violation of the Establishment Clause. We just received word that the Seventh Circuit ruled on Friday, March 15 in a 3-0 decision that the clergy housing allowance is constitutional. There may be challenges in the future, but for now the clergy housing allowance continues.

One Great Hour of Sharing is March 31; Plan Now!

One Great Hour of Sharing® is the Lenten Offering of the United Church of Christ that supports disaster, refugee, and development activities. The suggested offering date for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering is March 31, 2019. The UCC is offering a 2019 Planning and Resource Guide, which includes a OGHS Video Library, Weekly Preaching Notes from Lectionary, Sermon Starter, Offering Reminders, Worship Resources, Bulletin Inserts, Mission Moments, Childrens Sermons and Activities, Youth Activities, Sharing Calendar and Instructions, Sharing Calendar B&W, and Downloadable Art and Images. [Visit the UCC website for details.](#)



Women plan to gather around theme of Strong Sisters' Stories

The Planning Team for the 2019 UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat gathered October 19-21, 2018 at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC to brainstorm and plan the biennial UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat to be held October 18-20, 2019, at Blowing Rock Conference Center in the mountains of N.C. The theme will be "Strong Sisters' Stories." The supporting scripture is Proverbs 31; 25-26 and will be hosted by women from the UCC Southern Conference. The retreat strives to provide refreshment to the soul and relaxation to the weary as well as offering story sessions (workshops), participatory and/or reflective opportunities and unique worship gatherings. [Read more on our website.](#)

News from Our Local Congregations



Since 1980, the United Church of Christ has been in relationship with the people and churches of Cuba. For the past 40 years, through the *United Church of Christ Cuba Study Seminar*, groups of UCC members from around the country have encountered and learned about the "Cuban revolutionary reality". Now led by Pastor Tom Warren of Peace UCC in Greensboro, the trip continues to introduce participants to an understanding of Cuba rarely shared through the U.S. media. This years' Seminar group included 15 participants from UCC churches in Seattle, Saint Louis, and Pleasant Hill, Tennessee. The participants from **Pleasant Hill Community Church** were Barbara Smith, Sue Peeples, Don Rainer, and Linda Persohn. Read more on our website.

We love sharing news from our local congregations! Please send us pictures and explanations of special events at your church that we can share on our website, social media, and in this email newsletter. We think it's a great way to share ideas for events, as well as celebrating what other UCC churches are doing!

Email us at communications@secucc.org.

Training and Learning Opportunities



Boundary Training 101 Scheduled for May 30, 2019

by Carrole Moss

Date: May 30, 2019

Place: Pleasant Hill Community UCC

Event: Healthy Boundary Training 101

Time: 12:00 noon until 8:00pm

Did you know that it is now a **REQUIREMENT that all Ordained, Licensed and Commissioned clergy** serving in the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ complete this training by December 2019? As of January 1, 2018 it has been mandated that all clergy attend this training and follow up every four years for a refresher course. This course will help you to learn or, refresh you on what your boundaries are, appropriate and inappropriate behavior, not just in the pulpit, but in your everyday life. It helps you with relationships, self care, social media and other issues.

There are stories of misconduct by clergy in the news, on social media, in our conversations, and on our minds, every day. Please **DO NOT** allow your name and your story to become a part of the media circus. Times have changed, people have changed...the conduct that was tolerated 10-20 years ago is no longer acceptable. Please help us to help you by making plans to attend this training. Remember: **Healthy Boundary Training is MANDATORY!!!**

The registration will be open in a few weeks on our website: secucc.org. We urge you to make plans to be there. It is our promise that you will be informed and enlightened. When we know better, we do better!!! Come, let us grow together. I look forward to seeing you there.

"Thriving in Ministry" for Clergywomen

Clergywomen in any denomination across the South serving in their first appointment as a solo or senior pastor, and associates hoping to serve as solo or senior pastors, are invited to apply for Thriving in Ministry, which provides resources for through ecumenical peer group meetings, congregational trainings, transformative retreats (including an international pilgrimage!), financial support for restorative practices that promote pastoral well-being, and spiritual direction and coaching over a 15-month period. Funded through a grant from the Lilly Endowment Fund and offered at no cost. Applications are open for the first cohort, beginning in Sept. 2019. Deadline is May 31, 2019. Information is available at www.centerforministry.com/thrivinginministry.

Urban Mission Experience St. Louis

Urban Mission Experience St. Louis provides your group with meaningful mission work in quality agencies AND tools to think about the systems of injustice that make such work necessary. Dates available for Summer (May-August) 2019. UME StL is hosted at Epiphany United Church of Christ. Epiphany is an ONA, Just Peace, Whole Earth congregation seeking to become intentionally multicultural while living out a faithful and active social justice ministry in the city.

On your week's trip (usually arriving Sunday and heading home on Saturday) you will:

- Have 4 days of meaningful work at at least two agencies.
- Have one full day for sightseeing and fun activities.
- Sleep lock-in style in an urban church – in a safe and convenient neighborhood.
- Have full use of the kitchen to save on food costs.
- Have access to showers at the local YMCA.
- Learn more about yourselves, our society, and God's call to justice.
- AND help a small urban congregation with your ridiculously low cost of \$25 per person per night!!

For more information and to reserve your week go to:
<https://urbanmissionexperience.weebly.com>

Conference Calendar

Staff Meeting

March 26 @ 9:00 am - 10:30 am EDT
Online Virtual Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting

April 4 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT
Online Virtual Meeting

Upper Room UCC Fellowship

May 18 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm CDT
Howard Congregational Church, Nashville

Boundary Training

May 30 @ 1:00 pm - 8:00 pm CDT
Pleasant Hill Community Church

MID Retreat

May 30 @ 10:00 am - May 31 @ 12:00 pm CDT
Pleasant Hill Community Church

SEC UCC Annual Meeting

May 31 @ 12:00 pm - June 1 @ 4:00 pm EDT
Pleasant Hill Community Church

UCC General Synod

June 21 - June 25
Milwaukee, WI

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